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ABSTRACT

Based on the experiences of Northern Essex Community College, this paper outlines a basic process for community colleges interested in providing training for local business and industry. After the introduction, the paper cites three steps in getting started: preparing a list of contacts, assessing current program offerings and flexibility, and determining the services the college can provide. The next section focuses on contacting businesses, covering the characteristics of the ideal company and outlining three contact approaches, i.e., meeting with a number of companies to explore possibilities, using direct-sell techniques with individual companies, or meeting with individual companies to determine their needs. The paper then explains the process for designing a program which meets the company's training needs and presenting the program proposal. Next, the elements of the program proposal are enumerated, including curricular information, course schedules, entrance criteria, number of students to be served, equipment and supply requirements, company and college responsibilities, and budget. After issues to be considered in proposal design and negotiating with companies are discussed, the paper examines several aspects of the delivery system, such as recruitment, participant and faculty selection, program start-up, and evaluation. After a model for student follow-up is explained, the paper concludes with a discussion of three funding models related to profit margins, tuition reimbursement, and external funding. (KL)

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A PRIMER FOR COLLEGES WHO INTEND TO PROVIDE TRAINING IN INDUSTRY

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A PRIMER FOR COLLEGES WHO INTEND TO PROVIDE TRAINING IN INDUSTRY

Abstract - This article delineates the basic process and considerations colleges must make as they prepare to provide training for a local industry or business. It is based on the practical experience which the author gained working at Northern Essex Community College (NECC). NECC is a comprehensive, publicly supported community college in Northeastern Massachusetts, the heart of the Massachusetts High Technology Belt.

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INTRODUCTION

With the universal projections of declining enrollments, some colleges have begun to look to less traditional ways of utilizing their resources. The same population shift that has caused concern about the future number of college students has also resulted in a renewed interest in promoting life long learning, because there are fewer people making a first entry into the labor force. Rapid technological change and shifts in the economic base in America are bringing about the need for re-training or continual up-grade training of the current workforce. Colleges can help maintain their enrollments by providing this training. Colleges can provide workers with student services such as interest and aptitude testing, career counseling and transcript maintenance.

In addition to the benefit of expanding the student population base and the public relations and economic rewards for these activities, colleges can gain other advantages from a relationship with local business. On-going relationships with businesses can expose faculty to state-of-the art equipment which colleges often cannot afford. It can put campus

professionals in touch with techniques and ideas which are often well ahead of published accounts. Finally, it can provide them with a "real world" orientation.

All too often education and practical experience are dichotomized. Interaction between the two can act as a catalyst for the updating, revision or new development of programs. In the 1980's, such a relationship can be a source of prestige, giving a marketing advantage for the college's recruitment program and a strong industrial base that should also bolster placement activities.

THE BUSINESS WORLD

The business world has a different frame of reference than that found on most college campuses. While colleges focus on the learning of ideas as a general value, business focuses on the utilitarian value of ideas. Business people are usually more focused in their attention to the bottom line. The goals of the organization are clearer to everyone, and an individual's role in working toward these goals is understood. The organizations are usually closed systems with a highly structured hierarchy. This establishes a status consciousness that is based on position, sphere of influence, and locus of control.

They are generally utilitarian and value an idea if it works and has outcomes parallel to the goal (bottom line).

Projects are often evaluated first on a cost analysis, and then on their ability to solve a company's problems. The social good or creativity of an idea or project are not among the initial considerations. This is not the world of ideas.

The language, dress, and goals are very different in a business than on a college campus. What is valued and role expectations are also different. It is not exaggerating the point to recommend that a life long higher education professional think of one of two approaches when entering the business world. One can think of oneself as an anthropologist or a participant observer entering a different culture. Second, one can apply the counseling concept of "frame of reference". Suspend personal judgment and biases and attempt to understand events from the frame of reference of the business "culture".

It is not the author's intent to make business people sound so different. In fact, quite the opposite is true. The business world is made up of people. One must remember that the business and academy are very different worlds. The represenatives of both institutions are products of very different environments. Thus their mutual interests are often not easily identified.

GETTING STARTED (BACK HOME)

Working toward establishing industrial based course offerings is a developmental process. Initially, it will require a great amount of staff time for relatively little return. However, remember that this time is an investment.

The first step is a campus assessment which should provide you with the following information:

Contacts

Develop a list of companies and the names and titles of specific contact people should be compiled. Besides the fact that these companies

are potential clients, they can also serve as sources of information and resource people who can react to ideas and approaches. Furthermore, since business people may be apprehensive of college people, naming other companies which are "associated" (in any manner) with the college may quell some fears.

There are many sources for contacts. The first source to investigate is part-time faculty, many of whom have full time jobs in the "real world". Other sources include members of Boards of Trustees and other advisory boards, evening students, and personal contacts among the staff. If only a few contacts are made, an Industrial Advisory Board or Occupational Advisory Council is a good vehicle to establish further contacts with business. Members can also provide a forum for sharing the college's strengths and a source of free consultation. Business people are usually willing to join such a board.

Programs

Assess the program offerings and flexibility of the college within its current academic structure. Because it is important to deal from strength, attempt to market programs which have business applicability, a good reputation (via graduate performance), solid faculty, up-dated equipment, and forceful leadership. Strength, in these terms, may not be represented by the college's most "famous" or recognized program. All too often these programs are theoretical in nature and are not intended for the on-line worker.

Flexibility is a key concern. Usually the client company will not want to offer a full degree program, because they are interested in transferring limited and specific skills to their employees. Community

College certificate programs are usually closer to the configuration of courses in which companies will be interested. However, even certificate programs may be too long to meet a company's needs, and the college must be willing to consider offering courses in a different combination and sequence.

Flexibility is also essential because of the other factors which will impact on curriculum. The company's needs for applied courses and usable knowledge, the possible need for totally new courses or new emphasis in existing courses, the fact that worker/students are a different clientele than the traditional student body, and the time constraints of student's availability for classes are among these factors. The campus assessment should draw the parameters of how flexible the college is and how fast curriculum changes can be made.

Process Considerations

Develop detailed knowledge of the college's ability to work out the procedures of contracting with business and delivering educational services. Such factors as contracting, pricing, articulations with degree programs, parameters for using regular faculty, and what services are available to off-campus students should be considered. Limitations should be stated up front along with the factors which could be a market advantage.

Timing is an important consideration. An estimate of your college's time frame to provide certain products such as curriculum, faculty, signed contract, and implementation of the program should be developed. This estimate of your "turn around time" will give you the ability to meet deadlines.

Nearly every college has assets which it can offer to a business.

College credit is probably the most important and universal. Companies are interested in training activities leading toward the awarding of college credit. In their eyes, credit provides the following three advantages; it is an intrinsic reward to the trainees, an immediate reinforcement of their achievement, and a motivitation for some employees to continue to study toward a degree. A college's willingness to provide credit for an activity is a certification that the college will be responsible for the quality control of the activity.

Colleges have other institutional advantages over other sources of training which should not be underestimated. Generally, colleges can state that they employ professional trainers who are experienced in providing training to adults. At this point in history, many colleges also have experience teaching students with backgrounds other than traditional college preparation.

Colleges are stable, experienced institutions which have been providing training in the area in which training is to be delivered to the company for some time. Staff is available who are experienced at providing auxiliary support services. A college can serve as a depository of students' academic records which document their training and is available regardless of the students' future. Documentation is available in a universally accepted format. Comparatively speaking, colleges can offer all this at a low price. Consulting companies, in-house training departments, and even traditional tuition reinbursement plans can be more expensive than the price of a tailored training program.

The entire assessment process should result in a picture of what the college can offer and under what conditions and timeline programs can be offered. The contact list should provide some encouragement when it is realized that the college is not starting from scratch. These contacts will also be used in the next step of the process.

CONTACTING BUSINESSES

The ideal company to contact is described by the following characteristics. The company is experiencing growth; it employes people who need skills in areas which the college can train; there exists a shortage in the labor pool of people possessing the skills needed by the company; technological advances or the need for people has provided the opportunity for career growth within the company; the company is large enough to absorb training costs and employee promotion; but it does not offer extensive training in-house; and the college has a contact and/or a relationship with the company. Understanding that the ideal situation may either not exist or may be unknown, the college must choose some companies with which to make initial contacts. This decision should be based on at least three of the "ideal company" characteristics: size, manpower needs, and accessability (contacts).

There are basically three approaches which can be used to get together with company personnel. The first is to hold a meeting with a number of companies which employ people in an occupation which your institution is interested in providing training or re-training. At the meeting your institution does a presentation and individual staff members

have a dialogue with company representatives. If this approach is chosen, be sure to have visitors sign in giving title, address, and telephone number. This information will be useful later. Also, be sure that there is an established procedure for the visitors to contact a college individual following the meeting. Often, the attendees will like the presentation but not respond in the meeting itself.

Some advice on this approach. Keep the meeting short (maximum - two hours), start and end on time, and couple it with lunch. Don't expect a 100% turnout, invite twice as many people as you want to show up. Keep the presentation short, and professional. It should be kept interesting. Also, remember this is your big chance and spend a few minutes talking about your institution's programs and strengths. Have tailored material available. This material should describe the college and should delineate how to proceed from here with a specific college contact person.

In addition to company representatives, personnel from local Private Industry Councils, Chambers of Commerce, International Management Councils, Personnel Associations, and Economic Development Committees may be invited. Their membership often overlaps with your market, and they can get the word out to local companies. Also, they sometimes sponsor their own training.

A variation of this approach is to survey business and find out which companies have training needs and let them know you provide such training. While this variation makes sense, the return is usually so small that it is often unproductive. Company executives receive brochures

and advertisements every day. The survey may get lost in the shuffle.

The second approach is the direct sell. It is to choose an area in which to provide training and directly contact companies. This approach assumes knowledge of areas with manpower needs and comfortablity with contacting companies. In all approaches, contacting companies is a frustrating experience. It is difficult to locate the appropriate person to contact in a company. It is then often difficult to get through. This process alone may take two weeks and requires persistence. It is recommended that you initially communicate with the highest level contact you have. Saying the Chief Executive Office suggested you call will get someone's attention. However, usually the Vice-President or Director of Human Resources, Personnel Manager, or Director of Personnel is the person with whom you want to communicate.

The third approach is the approach the author has found most productive, particularly when a college is beginning in the training business. In this approach, you contact individual companies and attempt to set up a first meeting with representatives of the college and the company. When contacting companies, you tell them you would like to explore ways in which you can work together. With this approach, the results may be other than obtaining a contract to provide training. The result may be another type of relationship, which could be productive for the college. Other possible results are advice on curriculum, information on training needs, leads to other areas to explore, names of individuals in other companies, faculty (employees from the company) for evening school, hiring of your graduates, a placement site for co-op or apprenticeship, or a new member for an advisory board. During this meeting, agreement on your offerings or ideas for training could lead to a discussion about

sending students to your current programs, joint proposal activities or support for proposals which you are developing or donations of equipment. It is obvious that this approach is more open-ended. Your goals are to gather information and to establish a relationship of any kind.

Your first step is to contact the company. As it was previously stated, the Director of Human Resources or Personnel Manager is usually at the level in which you are interested. It may take a while to get in touch with this person; be persistent. On the phone tell him/her that you are interested in exploring ways in which you can work together and attempt to establish a meeting for yourself and a few others. Invite him/her to campus, but also offer to visit the plant. A plant tour can provide keen insight into a company's training needs.

The college should be represented by a small team (4 or 5 people) who represent various areas and expertise. The team should consist of one person who can commit the college and its resources, and a person who represents the academic side of the enterprise and has a knowledge of the college's total offerings and academic procedures. Persons who can speak the technical jargon (such as a department head or faculty member) and a person who can follow-up on the conversation are also advisable. At NECC, these roles are usually performed by the following people: Dean of Continuing Education, Dean of Academic Affairs, Division Chairperson of the Division of Science and Technology, and an appropriate staff member.

It is important to keep in mind the analogy of entering another culture. Dress, act, and talk in their image. A professional image (as they define it) is important to project. Bring material which describes

your institution. Catalogues, course descriptions, and brochures are all of interest. Also, bring written descriptions of any special programs, and other data such as placement data and lists of companies where students are placed or are on co-op. Eventually, you will develop material on your experience in providing training in companies. It is important that following the meeting, any follow-up required is done promptly. This may include sending further information, contacting another company employee, or actually developing a proposal.

DESIGN

Assuming that your contacts eventually lead to discussions of the delivery of a training program, you must develop a specific proposal to present to the company. It is important to remember the content should come from them. Your staff will have input. However, the closer the content is to what the personnel from the company want, the better the chances of their support.

The process for deciding what should be included in the curriculum should be done in three steps. The first step is to listen to the company's personnel delineate what they think should be included in the program. This can be done at a meeting where the company is represented by the Personnel Manager, the head of the department, or division where the trainees will work following the training, a supervisor who the trainees may directly report to after the training, and any other technical people the company would like to send. The college should have at least one content person from the appropriate department and the follow-up staff person from the original meeting. The college personnel should act as listeners, clarifiers, and facilitators. Their job is to get the information from this group.

The college people may need to bring up the issues of prerequisite knowledge to learn certain skills, articulation with college courses, equipment needs, and availability of faculty to teach certain specialties. The end result of this meeting should be either concensus on regular college courses to be offered, or a list of competencies that should be included in the curriculum. On some occasions, people from the company will want to develop this list by involving other company people. If this is the case, the college personnel must follow-up to ensure it is received.

The second step is to present the company representatives with a first draft of a proposal. This proposal should be presented as a draft and you should encourage input. During this meeting and your first curriculum meeting one of your chief objectives is to get the company personnel involved and committed to the program. They must have ownership in it to make it go.

The third step is to make a formal presentation to company officials who can make a decision. This presentation should use the revised proposal draft as a basis. Be sure to point out changes which their people made.

DEVELOPING THE PROPOSAL

This proposal should include the following information:

(1) Curriculum with detailed course descriptions, sequence of instruction, number of hours of lecture/laboratory time and qualification of instructor. Total number of credits and their applicability to a degree program should be mentioned.

(2) Schedule including hours of instruction, calendar for the program, and indications of when separate courses begin and end.

(3) Entrance criteria delineating how and by whom the students will be screened, any prerequisites for entrance, and registration procedure.

(4) Number of Students to be Served - This should include a breakdown by section of the anticipated number of students to be trained. Additionally the total maximum which can be accommodated should be stated. If your pricing is tuition based, then the minimum number of students per section should also be stated. An important item is the predicted percentage of drop-outs and the estimated number of completers.

(5) Equipment and Supplies - Include a complete list of equipment and materials necessary for each course. Also, include the name of each textbook with the cost. If the program will be held in-plant, specify number and types of rooms needed. The list should be separated by what the school will supply versus what the company is expected to supply.

(6) Responsibility - The proposal should clearly spell out every service the college will supply. In addition, all the materials and services for which the company is responsible also should be stated. Later, this may limit confusion.

(7) Cost - The proposal, of course, should include a budget. While this is not your detail presentation to your budget committee, some basis of cost should be included. Any services or costs beyond your normal operation should be added by line to this budget. It is suggested that services which are part of the package be listed again with a total cost and a per student cost. If the student will contribute toward the cost (such as buying books) this also should be mentioned.

The method and timing of payments should also be given.

The question of whether to inflate the initial budget is often asked. It is the author's belief that a high price could lose business. The author usually presents a realistic budget to the potential client. This realistic budget is tied to numbers of students and variety of services. So, when the company attempts to negotiate downward, it means less service. Soon a company will learn to trust your figures.

CONSIDERATION IN PROPOSAL DESIGN

Stylistically, the proposal should be short, clear, and simple. Do not have the original draft written by your campus grants person, although he or she should review it. Throughout the entire process, you must keep the company representatives involved. At NECC, we have the company interview the instructor before we hire him or her.

In developing the curriculum, it should be remembered that the students are fundamentally different from your "traditional" freshmen. He or she is older, working full-time, and often is not academically prepared for your degree program. Enough has been written elsewhere concerning the issues and learning styles of adult learners. It should suffice to simply list considerations which affect academic planning. The adult student is:

(1) Motivated to attend by an occupational goal.

(2) Experienced at the applications of theory based on their work experience.

(3) Insecure about college attendance and his/her personal academic ability.

(4) In need of academic refresher, particularly in mathematics.

(5) Anxious about testing, especially if admissions is based on the results.

(6) Committed to work full-time and has other commitments of time, such as family responsibility

When negotiating with companies, three points should be kept in mind. Even though companies have up to date equipment in large quantities, they usually are unwilling to halt production for a training activity. Equipment may be available when not in use for production. However, you must be clear about your equipment needs.

Secondly, when developing a budget, remember profit is not a dirty word in this environment. Overhead costs or other indirect cost should not be exaggerated, but they can be included in budgeting.

Thirdly, it is advised to develop a contract with the company. The accepted proposal can be the basis for this agreement. Again, keep it simple.

When dealing with a unionized company, it is very important to involve the union in the development process. They should attend the second meeting. Their input and agreement is critical. In addition, unions are invaluable in recruitment and selection of students. If possible, get the union leadership to sign the contract as well as company representatives.

DELIVERY OF SERVICES

The single most useful resource for recruitment is the Personnel Office. They will help get the word out and their company newsletter is a great advertising vehicle. As previously mentioned, unions are

also an effective way to reach the people. A large group meeting to explain the program is usually effective. As a part of the recruitment process NECC administers math placement tests and provides academic counseling to all who are interested. This is done free of charge. If mathematical competency is a prerequisite for your program, you should consider a developmental math course or some other alternative for people who do not qualify.

Decisions on who is to participate in the training program should be made jointly by yourself, the personnel office and the union representative. A list should be published and everyone should have access to the results. This list should also include class start-up dates and section assignments with rooms and times.

Faculty should not only be selected for their subject matter expertise, but for their ability to function in this new environment as well. Faculty with business experience are especially helpful. It is essential that the faculty member also have experience in teaching adults. As has been previously mentioned, the company should also be comfortable with the instructor.

The start-up of the actual program should begin with a large meeting. Company and college representatives should give a little talk to emphasize the importance and their support of the program. All paperwork should also be done at this meeting. Instructors should be introduced and a calendar of the program distributed. Following this meeting "normal" classes should begin right away. Don't waste the student's time.

Every segment of the program should be evaluated. Your regular

course and teacher evaluation system should be utilized. In addition, follow-up evaluation based on the specific goals of the program should be developed. It is also important to involve company representatives and union officials in the design and process of evaluation.

When going through the task of preparing for start-up, many details must be attended to: getting agreement from people on campus, sign-offs on forms, ordering books, hiring instructors, etc. It is suggested you keep a running list of the entire process, so next time you start such a program, you will have a checklist to follow.

FOLLOW-UP

Nothing works like success. A successfully operating program is the greatest marketing advantage you will ever have. Attempt to exploit it to secure other programs. Also, be sure to stay in touch with the company with whom you have already done business. This company represents your best lead, plus is the benchmark of your reputation.

When considering a model for maintaining contact with a number of companies, consider how book companies sell texts to your academic departments. Personnel are assigned certain institutions (companies in this case). These persons periodically visit the institution and get to know it and its people. When a product is needed, they are available. A college may consider assigning people to particular companies. The personal touch does work. This is promising, in light of the fact that brochures and mass mailings do not seem to work.

Other important parts of follow-up are evaluation and public relations. In addition to standard academic evaluation, the program's

impact should be studied. This summative evaluation should examine the results versus the goals which were agreed upon by the college and the company.

If the company is willing, a public relations effort should be made during the program. A college and business successfully working together makes good press for all involved. In addition, it is among the best advertising you will get.

MODELS OF FUNDING

Traditionally, colleges present a proposal to a company which includes the costs associated with the program, plus an overhead or profit margin. This approach results in a contract which is directly and fully paid for by the company. Companies use this approach to buy a number of services and it is by no means unusual to them. However, there are two other ways in which programs can be funded.

A second model which is simple for colleges to handle uses the traditional tuition reinbursement plan of a company. In this model, a course or a series of courses is offered at a company and students register. The company pays per participant as they commonly do. As part of your agreement, the company must agree to pay for a minimum number of students in order to cover your costs. Assuming that your tuition does generate income, this system is a logical extention of systems which both the college and business have in place.

The only possible snag in this system is that some companies only pay after a student has successfully completed a course, and your tuition may be beyond the means of a potential trainee's ability to pay. If this

is the case, you should explore alternative arrangements with the company. NECC has been successful in getting companies to be flexible with their procedures.

The third possible funding arrangement is to attract external funding for the project. In the current age of "occupationalism" in education, collaboration between companies and colleges are of interest to many funding sources. Federal, state, and local money may be available to fund the training portion of this type of program. Occupational Education, CETA, Economic Development Funds, and special state funds, are among the sources which are potential providers of money. NECC has been successful in receiving funding from the local Private Industry Council which administers Title VII of CETA funds and from special state funds.

Companies are pretty definite in their opinions on the use of external funds. Some companies are delighted to have someone else pay a portion of the cost for training they need. Other companies are skeptical of constraints and commitments which accompany public funds. These companies are not going to co-sponsor a proposal to receive public funds.

If an application for public funds is made, two points are worth mentioning. The college should be the grant expert and handle the researching of sources, the filling of application, and any other bureaucratic details. In the application, the potential funding source should not be requested to fund the total project. In calculating the budget, be sure to include at a minimum the in-kind contribution the company will make with items such as technical consultation, space, heat, lights, equipment, coordination, telephone, printing, and

secretarial support. Attempt to attach a dollar figure to these items.

POST-SCRIPT

The intent of this paper is not to give all the answers, but to share some of the insight which has been gained over time. It is hoped that it is helpful. However, the only real way to learn is to actively go through these processes. Get involved, and experience the process yourself. While this may not result in contracts, it is guaranteed that it will result in learning. This new learning for yourself and staff could have profound impact on your curriculum, the way you do business, and your income on the years to come. So, there is a whole new world which awaits you; go out and have fun!

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